

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4789

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 6766

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR ET US AGEN PC

SUBJECT: PROPOSED TERMINATION OF PC/E PROGRAM: EMBASSY COMMENTS

REF: (A) ADDIS 6763, (B) STATE 132829

THERE FOLLOW THE EMBASSY COMMENTS REQUESTED REF (B):

1. PC/E DIRECTOR HAS MADE CLEAR IN CONVERSATION WITH US THAT KEY CONSIDERATION UPON HIS RECOMMENDATIONS IN REF (A) REST IN HIS SENSE, SET FORTH IN SECOND PARA OF THAT TELEGRAM, THAT "WE CAN NO LONGER GUARANTEE WITH REASONABLE ASSURANCE THE SAFETY AND WELFARE OF THE PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER". THAT PC/E DIRECTOR HAS WRSTLED FOR MANY MONTHS WITH A GROWING SENSE OF CONCERN OVER THE SECURITY OF HIS VOLUNTEERS HE ALSO STATED IN HIS MESSAGE AND, GIVEN THE CIRCUMSTANCES THROUGH WHICH ETHIOPIA HAS BEEN PASSING FOR THE LAST 15 MONTHS, IT WOULD BE STRANGE IF IT WERE OOTHERWISE. IT IS THUS CLEAR THAT IT IS THE PITCH AND SCOPE OF INSECURITY RELATED TO THE DISORDERS IN THE COUNTRY THAT HAVE FINALLY CAUSED PC/E TO CROSS AN EVALUATIVE THRESHOLD WHICH HAS RESULTED IN THE RECOMMENDATIONS UPON WHICH WE ARE COMMENTING NOW.

2. THERE CAN BE LITTLE ARGUMENT OVER THE REALITY OF THIS INSECURITY AND OF THESE DISORDERS. ANOTHER REALITY WHICH MUST BE CONSIDERED, HOWEVER, IS THAT WHICH RESULTS FROM THE MANNER IN WHICH EVENTS ARE PRECEIVED BY INDIVIDUAL PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS. LOOKING THROUGH THE LIST OF INCIDENTS LAST WEEK WHICH WE HAVE NOT REPEAT NOT REPORTED BECAUSE WE DID NOT JUDGE THEM SUFFICIENTLY

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SIGNIFICANT OF THEMSELVES OR OF DIRECT CONCERN TO THE US, WE FIND

SUCH ITEMS AS THE DEATH BY STABBING OF AN AUSTRALIAN MISSIONARY PHYSICIAN PROVIDING MEDICAL SERVICES IN THE OGADEN; THE RELATED DECISION OF THE SUDAN INTERIOR MISSIONS TEMPORARILY TO WITHDRAW THEIR MISSION FROM THE AGADEN UNTIL THE AUTHORITIES ARE IN A POSITION TO ASSURE ADEQUATE SECURITY FOR THEIR PEOPLE; FIGHTING IN THE TOWN OF SOKOTO, MAKELLE DISTRICT, , WHICH HAS LED SIM DRIVERS TO REFUSE TO GO THERE; THE ARRIVAL ON JUNE 5 IN ADDIS OF A DC-6 AIRCRAFT AND HELICOPTERS LOADED WITH MILITARY CASUALTIES RESULTING FROM LOCAL CLASHES SOME 150 KILOMETERS SOUTHEAST OF THE CAPITAL; AND A WORLD FOOD PROGRAM OFFICIAL REPORTING TO THE BRITISH EMBASSY THAT HIS ESCORTED GROUP WAS SUBJECTED TO FIVE AMBUSHES BETWEEN DESSIE AND MEKALLE IN MID-WEEK. ALL OF THIS IS ADDITIONAL TO AFAR CLASHES IN THE NORTHWEST, THE DAILY DOSE OF INCIDENTS RELATING TO THE ERITREAN FIGHTING, AND THE TRIBAL BLOODLETTING GOING ON IN THE DEEP SOUTH. NO WONDER THEN THAT PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS ARE FEELING INCREASINGLY INSECURE BOTH IN THEIR SITES WHERE THESE ARE NEAR THE CURRENT SCENES OF CONFLICT AND, A FORTIORI, WHILE IN TRANSIT. PERFORCE, THEN, THEIR SENSE OF INCREASING ISOLATION AND PERIL OVERRIDES THE FACT THAT MUCH OF WHAT IS GOING ON IS NOT DIRECTED EITHER AT AMERICANS OR PCVS AS SUCH.

3. WE ARE THUS NOT REPEAT NOT DISPOSED TO ARGUE WITH THE REALITY OF INCREASED TURBULANCE AND THE REALITY OF GREATER PERIL PC/E PERSONNEL PERCEIVE FOR THEMSELVES BECAUSE OF IT. WE SEE TWO ISSUES POSED US BY THIS STATE OF AFFAIRS. THE FIRST IS WHETHER THE CURRENT SITUATION SHOULD LEAD TO THE TOTAL WITHDRAWAL OF ALL PCVS FROM THIS COUNTRY. THE SECOND IS HOW ADJUSTMENTS CAN BEST BE CONTRIVED TO COMPORT WITH THE POSTURE OF STEADINESS, PATIENCE AND SUPPORT WHICH WE ARE TRYING TO MAINTAIN IN OUR RELATIONS WITH AN UNSTABLE, SUSPICIOUS AND RADICAL EPMG/DIRG. LET US TAKE EACH IN TURN.

4. WE CONSIDER IT UNWISE TO CONTINUE TO DEPLOY VOLUNTEERS WHO ARE FRIGHTENED AND WOULD PREFER TO LEAVE. MOREOVER, WE CANNOT JUSTIFY MAINTAINING VOLUNTEERS IN SITES WHERE THEY ARE EXPOSED TO CONTINUING ABNORMAL LEVELS OF RISK OR FOR PURPOSES WHICH CANNOT BE MET BECAUSE, SAY, THE SCHOOLS ARE OR WILL BE CLOSED. WHEN FIGHTING BROKE OUT IN ASMARA, WE EVACUATED NONESSENTIAL PERSONNEL AND WHEN THE UNIVERSITY CLOSED, WE TERMINATED EFFECTIVELY UNEMPLOYED OPEX PROFESSORS. WE BELIEVE THE SIMILAR CAUSES CALL

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FOR A SIMILAR RESPONSE IN THE PC/E PROGRAM. HOWEVER, WE ALSO THINK THAT THE LEVEL OF RISK IS NOT SO HIGH IN ALL ETHIOPIAN LOCATIONS TO CALL FOR A COMPLETE AND ABRUPT TERMINATION OF THE ENTIRE PROGRAM. WE THEREFORE BELIEVE SERIOUS CONSIDERATION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO CONTINUING IT WITH TWO GROUPS OF PCVS: (1) THOSE WHO ARE ALREADY IN PLACE IN SITES WHICH APPEAR REASONABLY SECURE TO US AND WHO EXPRESSLY INDICATE THEIR DESIRE TO REMAIN RATHER THAN LEAVE THE COUNTRY: AND (2) A LIMITED NUMBER OF THOSE TO BE TRAINED

IN JULY WHO STILL EXPRESS A WISH TO SERVE IN ETHIOPIA AFTER BEING FULLY
AND CANDIDLY BRIEFED ON THE SITUATION HERE, INCLUDING THE NUMBER OF
PCVS WHO PREFER TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY. WE BELIEVE AN ADJUSTMENT IN
THE PC/E PROGRAM OF THIS NATURE WOULD PROVIDE THE BEST BALANCE
IN TERMS OF OUR RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE WELL-BEING OF THE VOLUNTEERS
AND OF US-ETHIOPIAN RELATIONS.

5. INsofar AS THE LATTER IS CONCERNED, WE WOULD EXPECT SUCH
ADJUSTMENTS TO CAUSE THE EPMG DISMAY, PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF THE
ALREADY EXISTING TEACHER SHORTAGE. MOREOVER, THERE WILL BE MANY WHO
WILL READ A PARTIAL WITHDRAWAL OF THE PCVS AS A PRECURSOR OF US
DISENGAGEMENT WITH ETHIOPIA. WE ARE CONVINCED, HOWEVER, THAT THE
LATTER INTERPRETATION WILL NOT BE AS WIDELY OR DEEPLY ACCEPTED AS
WOULD BE THE CASE IF THE ENTIRE PEACE CORPS PROGRAM WERE IMMEDIATELY
TERMINATED.
PARTICULARLY WITHIN THE DIRG, EITHER A COMPLETE OR A PARTIAL WITH-
DRAWAL MIGHT CAUSE SOME COUNTER-CURRENT OF SATISFACTION FOR
REASONS OF IDEOLOGY, XENOPHOBIA, FEAR OR "CIA AGENTS" AND BECAUSE
IN THE EYES OF SOME THE ZAMETCHA SHOULD IN ANY EVENT TAKE OVER
FROM THE PCVS.

6. IF WE WERE IN A POSITION TO COUPLE WORD OF A PHASE-DOWN
IN THE PC/E PROGRAM WITH NEWS REGARDING AN IMPROVED USG RESPONSE
IN ANOTHER AREA OF OUR BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP, FOR EXAMPLE F-5
AIRCRAFT, THE PILL WOULD BE EASIER TO SWALLOW. ETHIOPIAN SUSPICIONS
REGARDING THE POSSIBLE POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS
REDUCTION WOULD ALSO BE SOMEWHAT LESS.
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